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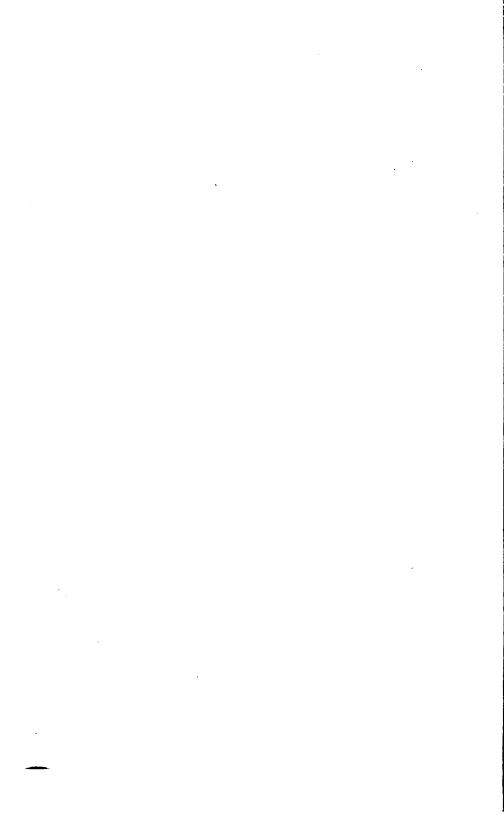
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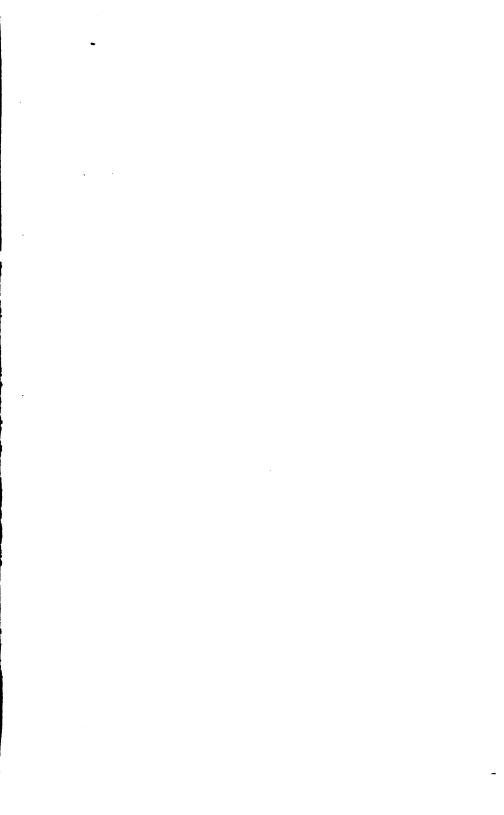


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SECONDARY EDUCATION

IN ITS

BEARINGS ON PRACTICAL LIFE.

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AN ADDRESS, XQ.

DELIVERED AT HOWICK, NORTHUMBERLAND ON AUGUST 26TH. 1899.

BY

MICHAEL E. SADLER, M.A.,

DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL ENQUIRIES AND REPORTS TO THE

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

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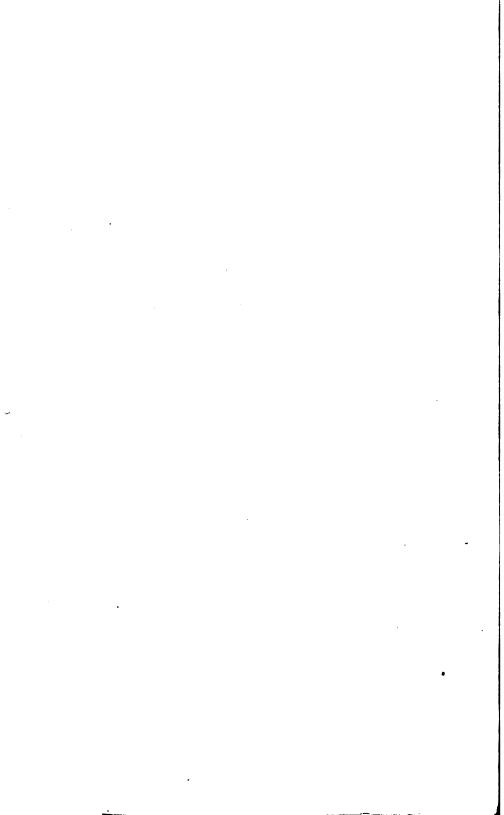
NOTE.

On Saturday, August 26th, 1899, in response to the invitation of Lord and Lady Grey, the Chairmen and Honorary Secretaries of Local Committees for Technical Education, and also representatives of various Educational Institutions, in the County of Northumberland, assembled at Howick to hear an address by Mr. M. E. Sadler, M.A., on "Secondary Education in its bearings on Practical Life." The address, as delivered, is printed in the following pages, and also a few words spoken by Sir Edward Grey, Bart, M.P., on the same occasion.

THE MOOTHALL,

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE,

August, 1800.



SECONDARY EDUCATION

IN ITS

BEARINGS ON PRACTICAL LIFE.

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I.



HEN I received through our host the honour of an invitation to be present at this meeting, I thought it would be best to choose a thoroughly practical subject for our discussion. I am

deeply conscious that it is only your invitation which makes it not presumptuous of me to speak at all before such a gathering as this. The topic submitted to you is a practical and a difficult one. It raises, indeed, one of the greatest difficulties which beset the problem of secondary education, regarded not in its administrative or political aspects (about these I shall, of course, say nothing), but in its bearing on livelihood and life.

This leads me briefly to refer to an important feature of all scientific study of educational problems. You have to combine in it two distinct but equally necessary things. You need, as you need in the planning and construction of a battleship, the kind of technical skill which can only be acquired by years of exact and concentrated study. But

you also need, not in a merely general way, but on points of detail and design, the constant criticism of the men and women who watch the working of the schools, who have themselves experienced their merits or defects either in their own persons or through their children, and who are best able to judge whether the machinery is producing what it claims to produce. There is no other subject which calls in the same way for the constant combination, at every point, of highly expert knowledge with non-expert comment and suggestion. It is perilous to have either alone. To use a word coined by John Stuart Mill, no pedantocracy can be trusted with the sole charge of a thing so necessarily human as the school. On the other hand, it is just as vital for Britain to have schools organised, equipped, and taught up to the highest known point of quality and excellence as it is for us to have a navy, which is the mirror of all that can be done to date in the way of construction, gunnery, and seamanship.

The subject of education is full of open questions. It is an aspect of lite, and, therefore, it is never long in one Any invention or discovery which changes the way of ordinary people's lives must necessarily affect, sooner or later, the school also. Education has to readjust itself to every great change which shifts the old order; to the results of the steam engine, the railroad, the electric telegraph, even to those of stenography, the typewriter, and the phonograph. Its aims and methods are being directly influenced by the vast progress of America, by the unification and industrial development of Germany, by the opening of Africa, by the stir in the Far East, by our own quickened sense of Imperial duty. And still more profoundly is the work of the school touched by those deep movements in human thought, those tendencies in scientific and philosophical discovery, which slowly but irresistibly change men's outlook on life and conduct and the future.

Perhaps only four times in recorded history has Europe passed through as difficult a time of transition as that which has now lasted 100 years, and is yet far from over. The gravest problems in national education are due to this, and to no other cause. All we can do is frankly to face the facts, and do the best we can as prudently and as sympathetically as we can. I will ask your indulgence while I lay before you a few difficult questions, and ask your help in solving them.

II.

In regard to secondary education, nothing is more striking than the degree in which all the more advanced nations are standing before the same problem—puzzled, a little worried, but convinced that some solution must be found. The problem, though for each country essentially a national one, is international too.

Take Prussia for example. In common with the whole civilised world, we admire the superb efficiency, the administrative precision, the faultless discipline of certain sides of Prussian secondary education. than ten years ago these words were publicly used by the Kaiser, with reference to the Prussian secondary schools. "The course of training, which they provide, is defective in many ways. The classical philologists have laid the chief emphasis on learning and knowledge, not on the formation of character and on the actual needs of life. If one talks with an advocate of the system, and tries to explain to him that youths must, in some measure, be practically equipped at school for actual life and its problems, the invariable answer is that such is not the mission of the school; that the school's chief concern is the training of the mind; and that if the training is rightly ordered, the young man is placed in a position, by means

of that training, to undertake all the necessary tasks of life. But I think we cannot go on acting from that point of view any longer."

I will now turn to America, which is the educational antipodes of Prussia. Within the last few months there has been published a work on "The Social Phases of Education," by Mr. Dutton, superintendent of the admirable schools of Brookline, Mass. He writes, "Education in America has clung too closely to old ideas and conditions, and has not adapted itself easily to new situations. It has been too abstract and general, and has not recognised the place vocation holds in the life of the individual and the nation." In other words, he holds that, even in America, the secondary school has to review its work in its bearings on practical life.

In France, where the literary tradition has been raised to a point of exquisite fineness unsurpassed elsewhere, the struggle between the new demands and the old educational doctrine is fiercer than elsewhere. It will not surprise us, therefore, to find criticism on the existing regime of secondary schools expressing itself in less measured and even in fanatical terms. For example, in his book on "L'Education et les Colonies," Monsieur Joseph Chaillez-Bert draws a doleful picture of the tendency of some secondary schools to paralyse the gift for practical "Your education," he writes, "turns out enterprise. officials, literary men, dons, recruits for the liberal professions, but it cannot form men who will wrest wealth from nature, men of energy in practical life, employers, traders, colonists. The exceptions are only those whom the subtle atmosphere of your schools has found too dull to teach or too practical by nature to be spoilt. take a lad and for the seven or eight years of his secondary school life you make him consort with the greatest spirits the world has ever seen" [with those whom

Milton calls "the cited dead"] "with Plutarch and the heroes of classical history; with Sophocles and Euripides; with Lucretius and Virgil; with Socrates, Plato, Montaigne, Pascal, Kant. You have led him along the stainless peaks of human thought, and by so doing, you have in a sense, spoiled him for practical life! You have ennobled him, I grant you, but in a sense you have spoiled and softened him. You have raised him out of his old condition, and spoiled him for what would naturally have been his condition in the future. You have made the life of contemplation or of speculative thought mark him for her own."

I remember hearing it said that one powerful argument which used to be urged against education in former days in the West Riding, was that if you were educated you couldn't make as much money as you could if you weren't.

To these I would add a few words more, written by the Procurator of the Holy Synod of Russia, Monsieur Pobyedonostseff in whom, whatever our judgment on his opinions, we must recognise one of the strong minds of "Seduced by the fantasy of universal enlightenment, we misname as education a certain sum of knowledge acquired by completing the courses of schools, skilfully elaborated in the studies of pedagogues. organised our school thus, we isolate it from life. ignore the fact that the mass of children whom we educate must earn their daily bread. In the interests of some imaginary knowledge, we withhold that training in productive labour which alone will bear fruit. unhappy day when education tears the child from those exercises of his early years through which he acquires almost unconsciously the taste or capacity for work. Everywhere (officially organised) education flourishes at the expense of that real education in the sphere of

domestic, professional, and social life, which is a vital element of success."

What is most significant in these four criticisms is that, though they proceed from different countries and from observers singularly various in their points of view, they all are directed to the same joint in the educational armour of the modern state. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that the bearing of secondary (and indeed of primary and University) education on practical life is likely to become one of the important questions of our time.

III.

Dr. James Ward once made a profound suggestion to the late Mr. Quick. He hinted at a history of education on new lines, namely, that he should try to ascertain (1) what each generation took the child to be; (2) what it endeavoured to do for the child, and (3) what means it employed in order to do it.

Let us apply this idea to the question now under our review.

Plutarch tells us that Agesilaus, the King of Sparta, was once asked what he thought children ought to learn. The educational system of Sparta was, of course, the admiration of many thinkers in antiquity, and therefore there was much point in putting to Agesilaus this searching (though apparently simple) question on educational procedure. The King's answer was that "they should do as children what they would do as men." In other words, the boy was a little man in short clothes, and early education ought to be an epitome of the practical life which the lad was destined to lead.

A very great French writer, discussing the question of education rather more than three hundred years ago, quoted the phrase of King Agesilaus, and added an approving comment of his own. "It is no marvel," said Montaigne, "that such an education (as Agesilaus recommended) produced so admirable effects." . . "We should instruct children not by hearsay but by action, framing them not only by precepts and words but principally by examples and works."

Now if this idea of practical education has been before the world for so many centuries, commended (as we have seen) on high authority for more than two thousand years, reinforced by the influential arguments of one of the most brilliant essayists in modern literature, and moreover an idea which obviously "jumps with" the practical interest and sympathy of the average parent—all these things being so, how is it, it may be asked, that such an eminently desirable invention has not been long ago universally adopted? How comes it that, even to-day, so many critics can find it necessary to denounce what they would agree with a famous writer in calling the "letter-puft pedantry" of the school?

There is, I think, only one conclusion to be drawn. The thing cannot be as simple as it looks at first sight. Seneca groaned over the defects of education. "We learn," he said, "we learn not for life but for the school. Non vitæ sed scholæ discimus." But let us put the plain question, "How, in point of detailed fact, are you going to make children 'learn for life' at school?" There is the rub. That is the point which has puzzled so many of the philosophers. Many of those present will know, as I do, from that best of all books—actual experience, that it is one thing to talk about teaching and quite another thing to teach. The first is sometimes easy; the second is invariably difficult. True teaching is not a trade or a

knack, but a fine art, one of the noblest, one of the most self-sacrificing, and one of the hardest arts in the world. We may depend upon it that if Agesilaus had been right, the history of Sparta would have been different, and with the history of Sparta the history of Hellas, and with the history of Hellas the history of the world. In short, the thing is not so simple as it looks.

The best fruit of education is not mere knowledge or even aptitude, though both are good. But it lies in an attitude of mind and heart towards nature, towards life, towards work, towards fellow-men and the future. shorter the time available for schooling, the more skilful should be the effort rightly to refine and temper the judgment and sympathies of the child. And, in so far as knowledge and direct instruction bear a part in this process, they should be strictly kept at a right angle towards practical life. But they should not be prematurely They should contain—so to speak, in specialised. solution—the elements of that measure of liberal culture which the life prospects of the child permit us to regard as being within his or her ultimate reach—without injury to bread winning, to family claims, and to personal service to the local community and the State.

Sometimes, however, behind the demands for a more practical education there lurks a darker purpose. For example, I have read Parliamentary speeches delivered in a foreign country which leave one in little doubt that the speakers resent the school, and the village school in particular, because it is the vent-hole of new ideas. Through its agency, it is argued, there seem to pour out the social discontents, the crude notions, and the distempered hopes which act as a solvent on the old order. The idea seems to have seized some minds (I do not refer in these remarks to our own country) that, though it may be unwise or impracticable to abolish the rural school, there is

a possibility of so remodelling its curriculum as virtually to keep the bulk of the rural population adscriptos glebæ, or at any rate to arrest a process of unpalatable economic change.

Waiving for the moment all question as to the rightness of the intention, I greatly doubt whether it could be put into practice. The school, it is true, is a potent factor in social progress, but it is not easy to withstand or reverse certain penetrating social tendencies by means of the school and of the school alone. The school can be got to co-operate with progress, or it may remain sleepy and dull; but the third alternative, namely, using it as the instrument of reaction, looks easier on paper than hitherto it has proved to be in practice. Great social and spiritual movements are in the air. They are as pervasive as air. The school may affect to ignore or may even protest against them, but, in so far as an intellectual or social change has become economically or spiritually inevitable, it will pay as little heed to the embargo of the school as the cuckoo did to the stone wall in Borrowdale. Great tidal movements of economic or spiritual change sweep over the world with irresistible force; walls and windows cannot withstand them. They always produce some mischief, always much discomfort, always disturbance and pain. But they prevail because they are needed, and, after a time, things right themselves on the new plane. What the school can do is to bend all its power to the task of understanding the inner significance of each new and perturbing movement. It should diagnose the symptoms, and seek to detect, and then bravely to remedy the evil against which the movement is a needful, though a more or less unconscious, protest. Then, but not till then, will it be in a position to influence the movement through its sympathetic understanding of it. Then, but not till then, will it be able to

elevate, to enlighten, to ennoble the movement; perhaps even to divert it from doing ignorant mischief and to direct it to its proper aim.

In every shape or form, the idea of stunting the life-aims of little boys and girls, and of artificially dwarfing what would otherwise have been their intellectual stature, seems to me to be a violation of the fundamental principles of Christian liberty. Towards any advances it may make, I trust that the same answer may be given as once on a time an official in a Government office is said to have made to a caller's proposal. Reporting the interview to his chief, the official wrote, "I told him that I couldn't if I would, and that I wouldn't if I could. He thanked me for my courtesy, and withdrew."

But in thus protesting against the tendency to use the school as a dehumanising agency, I would earnestly plead for the adjustment of its work to the environment in which it is placed. By this I don't mean that the school should seek to chain a child to the surroundings amid which he is born. But let the school interpret to the child the meaning and the opportunities of the world in which he is growing up. If the child's surroundings are remediably evil, let the school be free not to spare criticism. Don't muzzle it on social questions. But let it always, in that criticism, have practical remedies in view, and lead the child to a sympathetic understanding of other people's difficulties and of the unseen drawbacks, as well as the visible attractions, of other people's lives. This means that the teacher must have a real interest in, and love for, the institution, the place, or the kind of life in which he seeks to interest his pupil. Interest and love are the most infectious things in the world.

We ought not to forget that the intellectual conditions of our time forbid us to provide for our children, and least of all for country children, a starveling

curriculum. You can't confine a school which is to train character and expand the intelligence of young children or youth, either to purely commercial subjects or to purely agricultural. That would be like following the example of the Shetland minister who preached for a year and a half on the twelve wells of water and the three-score-and-ten palm trees which were in Elim, devoting one Sunday to each well and each palm tree.

The danger of over early specialisation springs also from a fact to which I have not yet referred. It is by no means generally possible to predict, until he is 15 or over, what kind of calling a boy's aptitude would best fit him for.

But, for the normal development of childhood, a course of skilfully unfolding studies is appropriate and educationally fruitful.

We sometimes forget how unstable the unformed character is. It has been well said, "We are not the simple straightforward units we fancy ourselves to be. We are rather an undulating and varying unity of impulses and powers, growing slowly by effort and discipline into the unity of the perfect man."

It is the ideal of education, in a free self-governing country, to promote and guard this growth: to guide it into its fittest direction; but always with reverent regard for its native powers and for its individual promise. Above all should we not abstain from any attempt to cast in the iron-mould of quasi-military discipline that which should develop into the orderliness of the free and self-respecting will?

IV.

I hope that the drift of my remarks has not been towards showing that the secondary school can have no bearing on practical life. That is very far from what I

meant. Two sentences, written by a Frenchman, go very near the heart of the matter. "That which the school ought to develope before all things, in the individual whom it trains, is the man himself—namely, heart, intelligence, conscience. But it must not be forgotten that the first and best safeguard that our schools can give for the morality of the man is to create in every scholar an aptitude for, and a liking for, that labour by which he will live."

Now, gentlemen, have the secondary schools, which we ourselves attended, done that for us?

Some of us can thankfully say that every day we live we realise more clearly what was done for us at school. No institution is perfect: least of all do good institutions think themselves so; but we may say, without challenge of denial, that we have in this country some secondary schools which, on the most essential points of educational influence, are absolutely without a rival in the world. Let us seek so far as may be to cherish and extend their best traditions.

But that is far from true of all. And there are others, of which their alumni might say, what Corneille said of his protector Richelieu, "He has been too much of a benefactor to me for me to abuse him; but he has done me too many bad turns to deserve my good word."

With your leave I will try to examine a little more in detail how far our secondary schools do, or can, prepare for practical life.

By practical life, I mean the whole range of callings—professional, commercial, industrial, adventurous, military, administrative, directive, legislative, official, social—for which those boys are being prepared, on whom it is worth while to make the capital outlay involved in a course of secondary education, extending up to 16, 17, or 19 years of age, as the case may be.

(t) For a certain kind of practical life, the English higher secondary schools give a training which is universally admitted to be the best thing of its kind in existence. They train leaders of men. This is very largely due to two things: first, because they are chiefly boarding schools—and a big boarding house at an English public school is a miniature world, the boys at the top having duties of administration and of responsible oversight. Secondly, it depends a good deal on the tradition of organised school games. They teach a boy to think of his side rather than of himself: to clench his teeth and put the thing through.

In saying this, you will understand that I don't mean to advocate athleticism as the final cause of education. But athletic interests are valuable in their way, as the gentleman knew who put the advertisement in the *Church Times*:—"Little Boy, whose cricket is promising, can be received at once in high class school in health resort for nominal fees."

(2) It should not be forgotten that, in former times, secondary education was only possible for the few, and that its curriculum had the special purpose of preparing boys for the more literary of the liberal professions.

This has left a very deep mark on the studies and traditions of our higher secondary schools.

· An American writer gives it as his opinion that "the study of a dead language makes the student mentally, no less than physically, stoop-shouldered and shortsighted."

Of course (not to mince words) that is silly; but all the same, we may question whether in some schools some other form of intellectual discipline might not be made as searching and found more appropriate. Personally, I think that for the highest grade of education, though there may be other things as good, there is nothing better as a basis than a really first rate classical training.

- On this point, however, three provisos seem necessary.
 - (a) Classical education, as we know it at its best in England, is not undiluted Latin and Greek, but Latin and Greek language, history and literature, used as vehicles for general culture. You will remember Dr. Arnold's remark, that the 6th and 7th books of Thucydides are not ancient but modern history.
 - (b) In intellectual discipline, quality matters at least as much as subject matter. The substitute for a good classical education will have to be very good indeed. Slipshod French and inaccurate German won't do the same work that Latin and Greek do in a first grade higher school. And it is not easy to change a great educational tradition quickly. When you have a good teacher, of ripe experience and great influence, it would be madness to lose him. In all education quality matters, not quantity. And the higher the grade of education the truer this is.
 - (c) A great educational tradition is one of the most precious things in the world. It is the outcome of generations of hidden self-sacrifice. It is the living influence which makes a school great.

The history of education teaches no lesson so frankly as this—that reform is always possible, but that sudden revolution is always disastrous.

(3) There seem to be at least four main types of curriculum which are at present needed in secondary education—the fully classical, the semi-classical (i.e. Latin but no Greek), the predominantly scientific, and that which takes living languages alone, as the basis of a training based predominantly on linguistic discipline. All four, with some sub-varieties, seem indispensable. So long as all are made as good as brain, adequate equipment, and

devoted service can make them, there is no cause to arrange them in a hierarchy of educational merit.

I would urge, however, that each alternative curriculum should have a distinct bias. If you give every subject a claim to an equal place in every course, you spoil all. But some initiation into scientific discipline, and some real introduction to humane letters are absolutely indispensable in every curriculum. An education lacking either science or the humanities cannot be called a liberal education. It means, in Milton's words—

"Wisdom at one entrance quite shut out."

Some knowledge of man and some knowledge of nature: training in accuracy of observation, in truthfulness of record and in exact felicity of verbal expression are the indispensable factors. The balance of the studies, which will secure those benefits, may well vary according to very numerous patterns, and according to the needs and teaching power of individual schools.

Of course a parent would choose one or other type or curriculum, according to his son's aptitude and probable future. But, beyond this, ought not the curriculum to bear some closer relation to the after-life of the boys in the school? Up to 16, I should personally say—perhaps not quite decisively as things stand, but nevertheless—no. The prime aim of a secondary school is to lay the foundation of culture—and it is hard to do that, according to the best standard of our time, before 16.

Beyond that age, it seems to me arguable that, without being specialised, the curriculum might be (so to say) tinted in view of the future calling of the pupil. Something to this effect is proposed for agricultural secondary schools in an interesting paper by Mr. Mortimer, of Ashburton School, in Devonshire. We have the principle recognised already in the army classes in our public schools. It is still more definitely acted on in the secondary schools for future officers in the German army. Our navy, of course, has its own higher secondary education. And one of our most pressing needs seems to me to be some first grade non-classical secondary schools, like the Prussian Realschulen, giving a purely modern (but not a Philistine) education of the very highest quality, based predominally on linguistic discipline in the mother tongue, in French and German (or Spanish); going to a good point in mathematics; teaching history and literature and geography vividly, searchingly, and with careful selection of selected topics; and disciplining every pupil, by practical experiment and later philosophical teaching, in the methods and the broad generalisations of modern science.

We sorely need in some districts that type of liberal education which is a natural avenue to a keen intellectual interest in modern commerce and industry. One of the most striking distinctions between Germans and Englishmen is that the former often take a much stronger intellectual, as distinguished from a commercial, interest in their business in life. As trade and industry become more international, a thorough knowledge of other living tongues, besides our own, becomes more and more helpful and necessary to us. Business again is becoming more and more an intellectual calling. A man needs to follow foreign developments, and to do this he must not only know some foreign languages but must habitually realise by travel and study what the countries stand for in the world's development. Further, in the case of youths destined for trade and industry, I would plead for some teaching in economics, and in the ethical aspect of the problems of capital and labour.

(4) It remains to say that secondary education should have a direct bearing on the duties which men will fulfil as citizens, as officials, as office-bearers in municipal or other forms of local public life. There never was a time in the

history of the English-speaking peoples when so much turned on the maintenance of a high standard of personal character and of intellectual acuteness in various departments of local government. Here is one of the greatest of the tasks which lie before English secondary schools.

Not a little of our success in governing other races, and of our feeling of Imperial obligation, comes from the training given in our best secondary schools. We shall need to train more and more of our lads to bear "the white man's burden."

(5) This brings us face to face with the highest of all the duties of a school. But the more intensely we feel the paramount value of this part of its work, the less shall we desire to speak of it in public. You will remember that Dr. Arnold, of Rugby, one of the greatest of English teachers, said that all the scholarship that ever man had is infinitely worthless in comparison with even a very humble degree of spiritual advancement. Whatever else they do or aim at doing, may our schools teach faith, hope, and love, and that the greatest of these is love.

Sir EDWARD GREY, in moving a vote of thanks to Mr. Sadler, said one of the pleasantest things in life was to have one's own personal interest in a subject of great public importance stimulated by someone who was a great master of that subject. That was what Mr. Sadler had done for them that day. His address was one of great value, and a really important contribution to the question of secondary education. So valuable was the address that he trusted it might be reported at length in the press, and thus enabled to reach beyond those walls. At prize distributions persons with no claim to be regarded as experts were reported at undue length, but in Mr. Sadler they had one whose words were worth reporting and being

read throughout the country. Mr. Sadler had told them that education was an aspect of life. That was what we were all trying to bear in mind, but what we seldom got put so forcibly. What we were not so well aware of always was the extent to which the Education Department Mr. Sadler had shown them that the bore it in mind. Education Department was not a pedantocracy. Agesilaus, in the case referred to by Mr. Sadler had given a very simple answer. There was nothing so misleading as a simple answer. Perhaps it was contrary to Spartan etiquette to ask kings more than one question at a time. But he wished the king had said what the child had to do, because until you knew what a boy had done, you were hardly in a position to appraise the merits of his education. Mr. Sadler had also shown them that the Education Department was well aware of the difficulties of the problem. A great Bill had just been passed by the Education Department, but that Bill was simply a skeleton. We had got the dry bones, and were anxious to know what flesh was to be put upon those dry bones. What would its muscles be like, and would it have a pleasant countenance? This would depend upon a variety of circumstances. If the Bill was to succeed, there must be co-operation, harmony, sympathy between the Department and the local governing bodies existing and to be called into existence. Sadler's visit would tend to bring them into harmony with There were people who looked upon the Department. the Department with suspicion, and even with fear. thought that if people paid less attention to what was said about the Department, and more to what the Department did, the suspicions and fears would vanish. Mr. Sadler had shown that the great body of the Department brought great abilities to hear upon the subject, and had a fine and noble idea of what education should be, and had a great desire to see the educational system of this country far more efficient than it had hitherto been.

Principal Gurney seconded the motion. He said Sir Edward Grey had expressed most felicitously how Mr. Sadler had come there and won their confidence. Teachers, however, did not consider that they always had a fair chance. In all human work, two things were necessary: not only must you have a force, but you must give that force time to act. Too often in this north country, education was considered as a luxury which must be indulged in very sparingly on account of the necessity of sending children out to earn wages. This did not give the teachers a fair chance. He hoped that an effort would be made by all who had charge of the lives of young people to keep them at school longer.



